

40. From the forest budget funds an expenditure of Rs. 817 has been made in the construction of new cart tracks, and of repairs to an existing one, which penetrate reserved forests.

(1). In the East Khándesh Division Rs. 767 were spent in making cart tracks over a length of 22 miles in the Sávida and Yával Sátputa mountain forests in their northern profile, in order to open out a grass-producing region of about 70 square miles, which had hitherto been closed against wheeled transport, and from which grass had never been exploited before, for the purpose of extracting grass for supply to famine-affected districts outside Khándesh; this road enabled the grass of the left Aner Valley in the Sávida and Yával Sátputa hills to be carted to the Ráver railway station, G. I. P. Railway, where a steam press, and several hand-presses were employed in compressing and baling hay; and the road will be very useful in future years for the extraction of timber, bámbus and other forest produce on carts, which hitherto have been unable to get into this wild and difficult part of the country. The greater portion of the outlay has, however, been debited to famine grass operations.

(2). Rs. 50 have been spent on the annual repairs to the Kalambari forest road in the Pimpalner Range of the West Khándesh Division.

(2).—*Buildings.*

41. A Range Forest Office with a seed room was built in the Mámlatdár's kacheri at Nevása in the Ahmednagar Division, at a cost of Rs. 2,167. Additions and alterations to existing buildings were made, as detailed below, under the sanction given by the Conservator of Forests from the discretionary grant placed at his disposal by Government :—

No.	Executive Officer.	Nature and locality of work.	Amount sanctioned.
			Rs.
1	Executive Engineer, Khándesh...	Additions and alterations to the Range Forest Office at Bhadgaon.	97
2	Do. Sátára ...	Putting tiles over the corrugated iron roof of the Range Forest Office at Tásgaon.	54
3	Do. do. ...	Making additions and alterations to the Range Forest Office at Malcolmpeth.	447
4	Do. Sholápur ...	Providing a weather board to the window of the Range Forest Office at Sholápur.	5
5	Do. Sátára ...	Additions and alterations to the Range Forest Office at Sátára.	21
6	Do. do. ...	Additions and alterations to the Range Forest Office at Shirála.	54
7	Do. do. ...	Do. do. at Tásgaon ...	42
8	Do. do. ...	Do. do. at Wái ...	55
9	Do. do. ...	Do. do. at Waduj ...	134
10	Do. do. ...	Do. do. at Dahivadi ...	17
11	Do. do. ...	Constructing a well with retaining wall for the Forest Bungalow at Lingmala.	473
12	Do. do. ...	Making a concrete floor to the Range Forest Office at Pátan.	43
		Total ...	1,442

(3).—*Other Works.*

42. Rs. 1,256 have been expended in the construction of wells of potable water in the wild forest tracks of the Sátputas.

43. Repairs to forest guards' huts, and the building of new huts also, for housing forest guards in their beats in five divisions of the Central Circle, account for a sum of Rs. 1,256-0-0, distributed thus :—

No.	Division.	Amount.
		Rs.
1	East Khándesh ... ..	657
2	West Khándesh ... ..	418
3	Násik ... ..	159
4	Ahmednagar ... ..	15
5	Poona ... ..	7
6	Sátára ... ..	...
7	Sholápur ... ..	...
	Total ...	1,256

(b).—PROTECTION OF FORESTS FROM INJURY.

(1).—General Protection and Breaches of Forest Law.

44. The year opened with 180 prosecutions in progress before Magistrates and 15 cases undergoing disposal by forest officers under Section 67 of the Forest Act. During the year 13,199 cases of breaches of Forest law were discovered, but in 2,312 of these cases the offender was not traced; 2,189 cases were treated under Section 67 of the Forest Act by forest officers; 1,610 cases were sent up for trial by Magistrates; and 7,088 cases were let off by forest officers, who warned the accused persons and relieved them of further proceedings under the forest law. The number of old and new cases under hearing amounted to 1,790 against 1,799 of the past year: of these 1,177 cases involving 3,101 persons were disposed of by conviction and punishment of the accused persons, while 321 cases involving 995 persons were dismissed, and 292 cases were left pending at the end of the last day of the forest-year, *viz.*, 30th June 1897. Of the 2,204 cases, including 15 of the preceding year treated under Section 67 of the Indian Forest Act by the Divisional Forest Officers, 2,091 implicating 4,851 persons were settled, and 113 remained unfinished when the year closed. A comparison of the prosecutions completed during 1895-96 and during the year of the report, with their results and relative percentages of failures, is given in the following statement:—

No.	Division.	1895-96.		1896-97.		Percentage of Failures.	
		Prosecutions.	Acquittals.	Prosecutions.	Acquittals.	1895-96.	1896-97.
1	East Khándesh ... ..	155	19	69	15	12·2	21·7
2	West Khándesh ... ..	76	8	112	13	10·5	11·6
3	Násik ... ..	157	19	107	9	12·1	8·4
4	Ahmednagar ... ..	405	74	422	107	18·2	25·3
5	Poona ... ..	458	110	487	104	24·0	21·3
6	Sátára ... ..	421	67	251	62	15·9	24·7
7	Sholápur ... ..	127	36	50	11	23·3	22·0
	Total ...	1,799	333	1,498	321	18·5	21·4

46. This table shows that during the year there were 301 or by 16·7 per cent. fewer prosecutions than during the previous year. Sholápur, East Khándesh, Sátára and Násik exhibit a decrease of 60·6, 55·4, 40·3 and 31·8 per cent. respectively, but on the other hand the percentage of failures in East Khándesh and Sátára is 9·5 and 8·8 greater than that of the previous year; Násik records a considerable improvement, the difference in percentage of failures being only 3·7; and Sholápur also has a better show than last year, the percentage of its failures being 6·3 less than of the previous year. In the West Khándesh and Poona Divisions